

ECEAP Edition

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"A monthly update for family and friends of preschoolers in Washington State"



Reflections on Voting

by Carol Rediske-Mudd, Children's Services

When I was a youngster, I occasionally slipped into my coat and walked with my mother to our local grade school where I stood in line with her in a quiet room with unfamiliar people and strange looking curtained cubicles. It reminded me a little of going to church, where everyone talked in hushed tones except for the sermon and the singing. We eventually ended up behind the curtain and I watched as she marked

a piece of stiff paper, folded it, then pushed the curtain aside and handed it to someone who pushed it through a small slot in a battered wooden box with a padlock.

The whole voting experience has always been mystical to me. When I was small, I only knew that

my parents participated in this activity every fall, and then sometimes again in the wintertime when I could see my breath as I walked along the sidewalk. When I began asking what they were doing, they always told me proudly that they had voted, and explained it was their chance to help make our town a better place to live.

Making my town a better place to live. How is that possible, I wondered — just marking a piece of paper? They explained everyone in town had the right and responsibility to go to a certain location on one day of the year, and place a mark on a piece of paper next to certain names. The people who had the most marks at the end of the day were our town's leaders. I began to visualize other mothers who were home with children just like me, thought about them setting down their dishes and dressing their children in hats and coats and gloves, walking together to the school, rocking back and forth with fussy babies over their shoulders as they waited in line for their special pieces of paper, and then crowding into the little booths to make their marks, all the while being watched by several pairs of large eyes. It was all mysterious and exciting.

My parents would read the newspaper and watch television the next evening. They would talk about the people they had voted for, who "made it" and who didn't. They also talked about other things they had voted for or against, and would sometimes argue with each other about the way they had voted. I know now I was watching democracy in action.

The mystery of the whole voting experience began to make more sense to me. Who and what everybody voted for was somehow counted in one

night, and the results mattered! Some of my parents' wishes were granted, while others were not. But they took their job of voting seriously, and instilled in me a sense of civic pride and responsibility. Pride that our country would allow us to have a say in what we want for our communities; responsibility

to tell someone what we really want — our hopes and dreams for our communities.

Now that I am grown, I am beginning to regret my choice to vote by absentee ballot. Although it allows me to vote at my leisure, I miss the trip to the local fire station. I miss talking with my neighbors as we walk in and out, the camaraderie, the hushed excitement. I miss the smiles I get from the volunteers as they sit behind their ledgers bearing my name and the names of my neighbors. After only a few visits, they would say, "Oh, I know who you are!" and flip to the hyphenated last name they used to stumble over. I would sign the big book, and they would nod and smile and make me feel glad I came. And I miss the little "I voted" sticker I would wear as I left the fire station, hoping it would be a gentle nudge to others to do the same.

I have a pact with myself never to miss an election. It's a good feeling, that signature in the big book. Whether you vote in person or by absentee, why don't you give it a try? You just might be surprised at the feeling you get signing your name and marking that special piece of paper with your dreams. Me, I'm thinking of voting at the fire station this fall. ♦

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WASHINGTON STATE
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
AND
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

New Child Disabilities Resources

by Heather Corbett, Children's Services

On June 8, 2000, the U.S. Department of Education Federal Interagency Coordinating Council (FICC) launched their new Web site targeted toward parents who have children with disabilities. The purpose is to give them easy access to disability-related information and contacts. According to Judith E. Heumann, FICC Chair and Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, "This site offers parents, in particular, easy access to disability-related information and contacts that can make a difference in the lives of their children." The site provides information related to infants, toddlers, and pre-schoolers with disabilities and can be accessed at <http://www.fed-icc.org>.



What is the FICC?

The FICC is an advising body to cabinet secretaries for the Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Defense, and Interior. The Commissioner of the Social Security Administration participates as well. The FICC smooths the progress of federal, state, and local activities related to serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers from birth to age five, who receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other federally-funded health care, child care, and social service programs. "We are excited to share how federal agencies are working collaboratively to improve services for children with disabilities and their families," said Heumann. In Washington D.C.,

the FICC meets quarterly and welcomes public attendance so diverse opinions can be shared.

The new website not only benefits parents, but it can also help public and private agencies look up federal efforts that impact their programs serving children with disabilities. The site can also serve as a forum to share important issues with council representatives. The council makes recommendations to the FICC cabinet secretaries on ways to expand opportunities for people with disabilities, including suggestions that may eliminate barriers to interagency programs. For government agencies, the site can help give a better understanding of what each federal program helping young children with disabilities specifically does, and how government offices can work together collaboratively.

Child Care Resources Report

A new report, "Child Care Then & Now: 1990-2000," has been released by Child Care Resources (CCR) in King County. The report has useful information that can benefit those interested in children with disabilities issues. It can be downloaded from the CCR Website at www.childcare.org, or you can get a hardcopy by sending \$5.00 to cover postage and handling to Child Care Resources, 15015 Main Street, Number 206, Bellevue, WA 98007. You may direct any questions or comments about the report, or request the location of the nearest CCR office, by calling Nina Auerbach at 206-329-1011, ext. 208 or sending her an e-mail at auerbach@childcare.org. ♦

ECEAP Website Changes

by Joyce Deshaye, Children's Services

"To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly."
Henri Bergson

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) website has been undergoing changes. Most importantly, we have a slight change in our web address. We can now be found at www.oed.wa.gov/info/csd/waeceap.

New information is constantly being added to our website, so be sure to visit. Currently, you will find many new online resources important

to ECEAP Directors, stakeholders, parents, and teachers. Examples include: a web-enabled version of the ECEAP Performance Standards, complete with hyperlinks; a Calendar of Events; the ECEAP Mission Statement; current and back issues of the ECEAP Edition Newsletter; plus important agency addresses and links.

We hope to expand our website to include much, much more. If there are things you would like to see us make available, send your suggestions to me at joyced@cted.wa.gov. See you in cyberspace! ♦

Electronic Funds Transfer Update

by Carol Rediske-Mudd, Children's Services

During our spring program reviews, several contractors asked us about the possibility of receiving program cost reimbursements via electronic funds transfer (EFT). Budget Program Specialist Laurie Bahr and I met recently with CTED fiscal staff to explore this avenue. We discovered that CTED hopes to institute EFT agency-wide in September.

Currently, the State of Washington's EFT process takes about three to five weeks to create a vendor. Each contractor who wishes to participate in EFT is required to complete a form designating a banking institution for the funds transfer. The form is then sent to the Office of Financial Management for review and processing, at which time a vendor number is assigned.

Bill paying, as conceived at CTED, should work like this: the normal voucher process would be followed, but upon receipt at CTED, the voucher would be coded for EFT. The actual transfer of funds would take place approximately three working days after the date the voucher was received in CTED's fiscal office.

From our analysis of the EFT process, there appears to be several potential benefits.

- ◆ First, once the vendor number was created, the actual reimbursement would take approximately three days, which is less time than it takes to receive a check via mail;
- ◆ Second, there is no danger of a check getting lost in the mail; and
- ◆ Third, EFT would assist the contractor with internal control by eliminating the handling and processing of warrants.

There also appears to be some potential snags.

- ◆ First, when being reimbursed via EFT, the contractor will not get a copy of their original invoice (voucher), but only a check "stub" showing date and amount of payment deposited; and
- ◆ Second, if a contractor is receiving funds from multiple programs within CTED, all programs must choose the same form of reimbursement—either EFT or check.

This may be an opportunity to utilize technology to our mutual benefit! Stay tuned for more EFT information this coming fall. ◆

"Ask for Transcripts" Campaign

by Michael Zimmerman, Children's Services

Partnership for Learning has begun a campaign directed at getting Washington businesses, starting September 2000, to begin asking job applicants who are current high-school students or recent graduates for copies of their high school transcripts. The goal is to send a message to students that hard work and achievement matters, thus, reinforcing efforts to raise academic standards in schools.

Recently, Governor Locke sent all state agencies a message of support for the "Ask for Transcripts" campaign. He has encouraged us to make transcript requests a regular part of our hiring procedures for current high school students or recent graduates. As he points out, the transcripts should be viewed as one of many sources of information about an individual, but not as the sole deciding factor for employment. By acknowledging the importance of academic performance and

hard work in school, we can reinforce the high value of education throughout one's life.

As such, we are encouraging our contractors to join in the "Ask for Transcripts" campaign. For more information, check out the Partnership for Learning website at www.partnership-wa.org. This is one more way we can make a difference in the lives of children in Washington. ◆

You can now access the ECEAP Performance Standards through the Internet at http://www.oecd.wa.gov/info/csd/waeceap/HTML_Standards/1.2_Standards_Frame.htm



E-Mail Demystified, Episode One

by Michael Zimmerman, Children's Services

With the advent of electronic mail (e-mail), never before in the history of the world has it been possible for so many people to make so many mistakes so easily and regret it so quickly.

We've all hit the "Send" button absent-mindedly or accidentally, only to scream in horror and frantically search for the "Retract" button. Unfortunately, there is no "Retract" button, and e-mail won't self-destruct upon command, at least not quite yet.

The promise of e-mail has always been its downfall as well: the lure of instant communication anywhere in the world. Too often, what gets communicated is either unintentional or inflammatory, garbled by incompatible software standards, buried under piles of helpful information and reasonable commercial solicitations (i.e. spam), or lost in the ether, delivered to the same place where mismatched socks from our collective clothes-dryers land. Clearly, until we master the medium, we are at the mercy of e-mail.

Plain-Text vs. HTML

To start, the basic nature of e-mail is what's known as "plain text". Plain text messages adhere to a common technical standard that allows them to be universally understood, regardless of what platform of computer and type of software you use to send or read them. They are perfect for getting your point across, short but not-so-sweet. They can handle only basic formatting, such as paragraphs, tabs, and spaces.

To fill the aesthetic void of plain text e-mail, unofficial conventions have developed such as *using asterisks on each end of a comment* in place of bold text, or _underscores to signify underlined text_. More common are "emoticons" (short for "emotion icons") that are used to convey the author's ironic or playful intent in the absence of face-to-face "real-time" interaction. To understand those sometimes clever, often annoying little faces one finds spread throughout many e-mail messages, you have to tilt your head to the left when looking at them. :-) For a field guide to common emoticons and how to create them, check out <http://www.chirpingbird.com/netpets/html/computer/emoticon.html>.

Newer e-mail software can send HTML messages, which are essentially mini-webpages. This

allows the sender to include more complex formatting, such as bold or underlined text, bullets, and even pictures. However, not all e-mail clients (a fancy term for software) can read HTML messages, and they end up displaying the message text along with all the background code that describes the unrecognizable formatting. It isn't very pretty. Using HTML formatting can deter many people from reading your messages, so it is best to stick with plain text as your default style unless you just can't live without the bells and whistles of HTML.

Internet + Etiquette = Netiquette!

Yes, there is such a thing as etiquette on the Internet, but it comes with a distinct new vocabulary. Two of the most common rules of behavior that are often violated by "newbies" (those new to the Internet and presumably un-versed in proper netiquette) are no flaming and NO SHOUTING. Shouting, as you can see, is the practice of typing in all capital letters. It is considered very rude, and as a practical matter, it is much harder to read than text in normal sentence case. The flip-side practice of typing in all lower case letters, with absolutely no capital letters at all, is also difficult to read. Remember, while e-mail is fast and efficient, you still don't want anything to detract from your message.

Flaming is the practice of communicating very rude things to someone while hiding behind the virtual anonymity of the Internet. Typically, people flame each other in a chat room or on an electronic bulletin board, but the practice extends to e-mail as well. If someone sends a message that you disagree with, and in return you reply with comments about their complete and total lack of any real knowledge whatsoever, and why do they even bother opening their mouth because they have nothing of value to offer and besides they ought to just... ahem, you get the picture. It is considered flaming when you would never say to someone face-to-face what you just sent them in an angry message.

Next month we'll talk about e-mail attachments and groupware. Also, Joyce Deshaye will explain the difference between the ECEAP_Admin e-mail account, our ECEAP Directors group distribution list, and the ECEAP Discussions Listserv. Until then, watch those itchy trigger fingers and be sure to spell check before you hit "Send"! ♦



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